

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 326

By Bell

A RESOLUTION to honor Joseph McMinn, fifth Governor of the State of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to consider the early history of this State, and recognize those seminal public figures who, with determined leadership and inestimable courage, led Tennessee through its earliest days, shaping its development and laying the groundwork for the great State of today; and

WHEREAS, one such early figure was Joseph McMinn, the State's fifth Governor, after whom East Tennessee's McMinn County was named; and

WHEREAS, born June 22, 1758, on a farm at West Marlboro Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania, Joseph McMinn was the fifth of Robert and Sarah Harlan McMinn's ten children; early in his life, his Quaker parents ensured that their son received all the education available to him; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, Joseph McMinn became acquainted with the Cherokee Indians of Western North Carolina; a few years after these early encounters with some of the country's indigenous inhabitants, he served in the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, on May 9, 1785, Mr. McMinn wed Hannah Cooper and roughly a year later, the couple relocated to what would soon become Hawkins County, Tennessee; the couple took up residence at their "New Market" farm near Rogersville; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the work of his farm, Joseph McMinn opened a store in Rogersville, and he enjoyed great success in both of his vocations; perhaps in part because of his prosperity, he gained the attention of William Blount, Territorial Governor of the Territory of the United States South of the Ohio River, who commissioned Mr. McMinn as a Lieutenant in the newly-formed Hawkins County Militia; and

WHEREAS, his first foray into politics came in 1792, when Governor Blount appointed Joseph McMinn Justice of the Peace for Hawkins County; Mr. McMinn would continue his involvement in Tennessee politics until his death in 1824; and

WHEREAS, in 1794, Joseph McMinn was chosen by Governor Blount to serve in the Territorial Legislature as a Representative of Hawkins County; when the Constitutional Convention was held in Knoxville on January 11, 1796, Representative McMinn was selected to carry the new State Constitution to United States Secretary of State Timothy Pickering in Philadelphia, the seat of the new government; and

WHEREAS, shortly after his return from Philadelphia, Joseph McMinn became a State Senator in the Tennessee General Assembly, and served in that capacity throughout the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth General Assemblies; for three of his terms, Joseph McMinn served as Speaker of the Senate; and

WHEREAS, in 1801, Governor Archibald Roane appointed Senator McMinn chairman of a committee created to prepare a motto and device for the Great Seal of the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, as the term of Governor Willie Blount came to a close, a number of the State's first citizens entreated Joseph McMinn to run for the Governorship; he acquiesced and on September 27, 1815, Judge W. W. Cooke of the State Supreme Court administered the Oath of Office, thus inaugurating Governor Joseph McMinn; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure in office, Governor McMinn worked assiduously to make more land available for settlers seeking to establish farms, as he and his first wife had when they first moved to Hawkins County; a close ally in this effort was General Andrew Jackson, another distinguished Tennessean, who had firmly established his reputation as a patriot of the young republic during the War of 1812; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his three two-year terms, Governor McMinn also established the first state penitentiary, sought to improve the quality of education in the State, and worked to make Tennessee's rivers more navigable and, thus, more conducive to commerce; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the Hiwassee Purchase, four new counties were added to the State; in November 1819, a tract of 435 square miles in lower East Tennessee became McMinn County, named for the Governor who oversaw the addition of such a large swath of territory. Hamilton, Bradley, and Monroe Counties were also created out of this new land; and

WHEREAS, after the close of his third term as Governor, Joseph McMinn was placed in charge of the Cherokee Agency, which he served until his passing on November 17, 1824; and

WHEREAS, Governor McMinn was married three times; his first wife, Hannah, died in 1811, while his second wife, Rebecca Kincade, whom he married on January 5, 1812, passed away in 1815; and

WHEREAS, at the time of his death, Joseph McMinn was married to Nancy Williams, to whom he was betrothed in 1818; and

WHEREAS, the early history of Tennessee includes scores of courageous and enterprising settlers and citizens; their prodigious efforts, often undertaken despite conditions of great uncertainty and even mortal danger, have contributed in no small part to the cultural richness and material prosperity the people of the State enjoy today; and

WHEREAS, Governor McMinn was one of those early Tennesseans whose leadership and vision guided the formation not only of this State but of the early American republic as well; taking the raw materials of a wild and untamed land, Americans like Joseph McMinn forged a nation that has become the world's leader, a beacon of democratic liberty, and a realization of humankind's greatest hopes and virtues; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor the memory of the fifth Governor of Tennessee, Joseph McMinn, whose early contributions to the formation of this State ensured that the settlers and citizens of his day, along with many subsequent generations of Tennesseans, would enjoy the rich beauty and great bounty the State has to offer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.